

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 14, 2002

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California Off-Highway Recreation Commission Awards County \$584,000 For Law Enforcement at Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area

The Imperial County Sheriff's Department has been awarded \$584,000 by the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission for law enforcement at the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area in 2001-2002.

The Commission, at its January 10 meeting in Ontario, California, also approved a \$50,000 grant to San Bernardino County for its law enforcement efforts. San Bernardino County committed to assisting Imperial County with law enforcement needs during the upcoming President's Day weekend.

The Commission postponed consideration of the federal Bureau of Land Management's request for \$1.3 million to manage and provide law enforcement at Imperial Sand Dunes. Instead, the Commission requested the BLM, which has the ultimate responsibility for managing the area, to respond to several issues and report back at the Commission's February 12 and 13 meeting in Sacramento.

"I am pleased with the Commissioner's actions. It provides necessary funds to the Sheriff's Department to help get the job done, and requires the BLM to answer to several issues requested by the Commission," said California State Parks Deputy Director David L. Widell of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division.

"The State recognizes county funds are limited. At the same time, State funding is not the only solution. At the end of the day, the federal government will need to appropriate more federal funding to this area to ensure the protection of public safety, natural resources and recreational opportunity," said Widell.

Among the issues the Commissioners want investigated by the BLM:

- Alcohol use within the recreation area
- Visitor carrying capacity
- Development of a safety and outreach program, including a detailed plan to utilize the already-established volunteer sand dune community.

The grant awarded Imperial County is notable. Prior to the Davis Administration, Imperial County received no off-highway vehicle grants for law enforcement. However, with the encouragement of the Davis Administration, the Imperial County Sheriff's Department submitted and received grants in 2000 for \$285,000 for staffing and off-highway vehicle enforcement equipment. The 2001-2002 grant is double that amount.

Since the beginning of the State's grant program, California has provided more than \$19 million to assist the BLM with off-highway vehicle management at Imperial Sand Dunes. Law enforcement funding to the BLM increased from \$148,000 in 1999 to \$292,000 in 2000, an increase of 97 percent.

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